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Statewide hospital survey: Rate of health care personnel receiving annual flu vaccine steadily rises

(Topeka, KS – January 22, 2016) Increasing numbers of Kansas hospital workers are rolling up their sleeves each year to help protect the health of their patients and co-workers. During last year’s flu season, more than 9 out of 10 hospital personnel, medical staff, volunteers, students and contractors were immunized against the flu.

A statewide hospital survey conducted annually by the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative (KHC) confirmed that the influenza immunization rate among health care personnel has steadily risen over the past seven years.

According to KHC’s recent survey of 141 Kansas hospitals, the statewide immunization rate of 91 percent during the 2014-15 flu season is the highest yet, and compares favorably with the national rate of 90.4 percent. In contrast, the first statewide survey KHC conducted in 2009 found that only 64 percent of health care workers and medical staff were immunized against the flu.

“Every year, more and more health care workers make a conscious decision to protect their patients, their co-workers and everyone visiting their facility when they receive their flu shot,” said Kendra Tinsley, KHC executive director. “While we still have much work to do, we are pleased with the significant progress Kansas hospitals have made in this important patient safety initiative in the interest of their communities.”

Since 2008, KHC has campaigned to increase the number of hospital health care personnel receiving seasonal influenza vaccinations as part of its statewide efforts to decrease health care-associated infections. KHC is working with hospitals to achieve a 100 percent immunization rate by providing education, encouraging adoption of best practices and facilitating resource sharing.

The most frequently used methods by Kansas hospitals for ensuring all personnel are immunized include providing education about the flu vaccine, sending reminders, and monitoring progress facility-wide.

Several leading national health care and patient safety organizations have recommended that all hospital health care personnel, including medical staff, receive the seasonal influenza vaccine—a key measure in preventing the spread of influenza.

One key recommendation that now more than one-third (36.9 percent) of Kansas hospitals had adopted in time for last year’s flu season is a condition-of-employment policy, which adds the influenza vaccination to the hospital’s list of required vaccines to be employed, unless medically exempted. Kansas hospitals that have adopted such policies have achieved immunization rates of 95 percent or greater.

National recommendations and resources for hospitals are available on the KHC website at www.khconline.org/initiatives/immunization-project

KHC is a provider-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to transform health care through patient-centered initiatives that improve quality, safety and value. Founded in 2008 by the Kansas Hospital Association and the Kansas Medical Society, KHC embodies the commitment of two of the state's leading health care provider groups to act as a resource and to continuously enhance the quality of care provided to Kansans. For more information about the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative visit www.khconline.org.